

Super-Secret CIA Rarely in News

By DONALD J. MAY
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WASHINGTON (UPI) — The

U.S. Central Intelligence Agency operates from a massive building out in the quiet countryside across the Potomac River a few miles from Washington.

Except for occasions when U.S. foreign policy troubles come crashing down around it, CIA conducts its business in privacy just on the edge of public awareness.

One of these sudden plunges into headlines took place recently as part of the political crisis in South Viet Nam which, with vast U.S. assistance, is fighting off Communist guerrillas from North Viet Nam.

John H. Richardson, whose public title was first secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, was identified in newspapers as really the CIA chief there. He later was transferred. The agency itself was accused in print of following policies independent of Washington.

President Kennedy, in a press conference Oct. 9, praised Richardson as "a very dedicated public servant" and assured newsmen "flatly that the CIA has not carried out independent activities."

Questions Remain

There the matter was supposed to end. But there remain a number of questions about U.S. activities in Viet Nam, wholly or in part connected with CIA, which have never been explained.

One was the setting up in 1961 of special Vietnamese military units called the "Special Forces" — or rather the way they were set up. These elite forces specially trained for counter-guerrilla warfare.

With U.S. assistance, they were patterned after "Special Forces" which the United States also has and which are based at Bragg, N.C.

Though the "Special Forces" are technically part of the local army, they were set up in 1961 to act as

advisers, in effect, directly from the Saigon palace rather than through the Vietnamese general staff.

Used By Brother

Inside the palace, President Ngo Dinh Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, took a particular interest in the Special Forces. On Aug. 21, when Nhu engineered government raids against Buddhists, he called on one unit of the Special Forces to assist. This unit stood guard outside while Vietnamese police entered and raided Buddhist pagodas.

Later it was reported from Saigon that the Special Forces were paid from CIA funds. Washington officials have never confirmed this. The state and defense departments will say only that the financing of the units is "classified."

It is known that CIA maintained a close working relationship with the units.

It also has been learned reliably that Richardson, the supposed U.S. Embassy "first secretary," was under explicit instructions from Washington to cultivate Nhu.

Works Both Sides

The United States was thus working "both sides of the street" in Viet Nam — maintaining an overt relationship with President Diem and a covert one with Nhu.

In the "gold fish bowl" of Saigon, it developed, a great number of people knew who Richardson was, and they knew at least a bit about CIA's ties with Nhu. Not only Vietnamese sources but a number of U.S. officials were outraged over this and denounced CIA and Richardson to American reporters.

It was another case — like the Cuban Bay of Pigs Invasion — in which CIA apparently had operated under very shallow "cover."

So far as has been made public, no U.S. official in Saigon has been disciplined for blabbing on CIA.

In fairness to the agency, it must be said that no Washington news reporter can claim to have the full story of this or of what CIA did in Viet Nam is presumably still unknown and

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